



Adversity

This PASTOR'S GUIDE SHEET was developed by Dr. Joe K. Taylor, Senior Pastor, South Reno Baptist Church, Reno, NV • jtaylor@southreno.com
Scriptures are printed verbatim with references noted but highlights and underlines are added. Quotes and all primary sources are footnoted.

There Isn't Enough Room to List Every Type Of Adversity:

But here are a few...

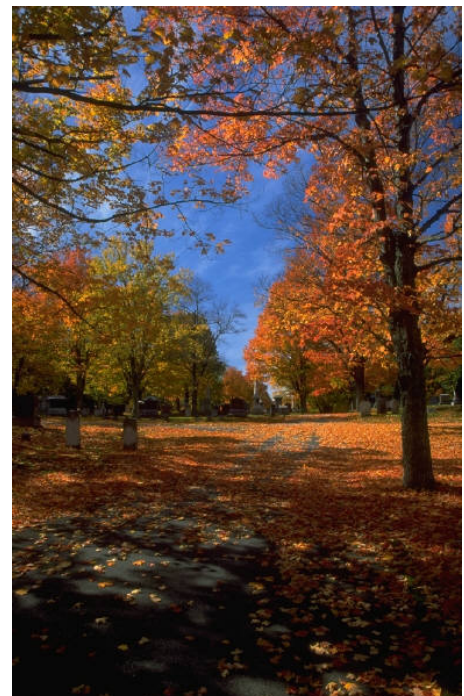
Unemployment	Diabetes	Arthritic Pain	
Migraine Headaches	Crushed Vertebrae	Brain Tumor	
Cystic Fibrosis	Mental Handicaps	Alzheimer's	Paralysis
Broken Engagement	Unwanted Divorce	SIDS	HIV
AIDS	Bankruptcy	Parkinson 's disease	Cancer
Multiple Sclerosis	Victim of Marital Infidelity	Loss of Eyesight/Hearing	
Death of a Loved One	Single Parenthood	Amputation of a Limb	
Depression	Rebellious Children	Personal Relationships	

Adversity...is the condition of hardship, affliction, or severe trial which may come in any form, style, or duration. Adversity—life's testing time—is no respecter of persons.

When you feel buffeted by adversity, God's Word can become your strong tower, if you allow it to. Please know that God is all powerful but that does not mean we will have heaven on Earth. We live in a fallen world that is not fair. Here are some broad principles from God's Word that will help you gain some insight into adversity.

I f God promised His servants an unbroken run of prosperity, there would be many counterfeit Christians. Don't be surprised at famine ... it is permitted to root you deeper just as a strong wind makes the tree grapple deep into the soil.

– F.B. Meyer



What the Bible says about Adversity

1. There is the reality of adversity

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

- James 1:2-4 (NASB)

- There is *definiteness* about trials, they come!
- There is an *indefiniteness* about trials, we do not know when they will come!
- There is an *inclusiveness* about trials, they come in all shapes and sizes into our lives.

“In this world, you will have trouble.”

- John 16:33 (LB)

2. There is a reason in adversity.

“Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- James 1:2-4 (NIV)

“...at the present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident—it happens to prove your faith.”

- 1 Peter 1:6b-7 (PME)

3. There is a proper reaction we should have to adversity.

“Consider it all joy my brethren, when you encounter various trials...”

- James 1:2 (NASB)

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...”

- Psalm 23:4 (NASB)

Note: “Joy” means to have a “deep spiritual understanding” of our situation.

4. In everything, God works for the good of those who love Him. (See page 5 of this Pastor’s Guide)

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”

- Romans 8:28 (NIV)

5. We cannot always comprehend God’s ways, as He in His wisdom carries out His plan.

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has ever given to God, that God would repay him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen!”

- Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)

A Practical Word about Your Joy and Your Storms

1. The difficulties we experience as Christians will come from one of six sources:

- A. The natural consequences of foolish actions and/or decisions.
- B. The temptations of Satan.
- C. The discipline of God as a consequence of sin.
- D. The testing of God designed to cause spiritual growth.
- E. The consequences of other peoples sin in our lives.
- F. “Stuff Happens”

Very Important: We may gain insight into our “adversity” if we understand the source of that adversity.

2. Christianity is not a vaccine that immunizes us to “storms” in life.

“The good man does not escape all troubles—he has them too. But the Lord helps him in each and every one.”

- Psalm 34:19 (LB)

3. Storms are impartial.

“(It) rains on the just and the unjust too.”

- Matthew 5:45 (LB)

4. “God is in the business of sustaining not explaining.”

- Paul Powell, Gospel for the Graveside.

5. Please remember that “answers” do not bring healing in a time of trouble, only God’s presence brings healing and peace.

6. All storms are temporary, even though some are life long.

“There is a wonderful joy ahead. Even though the going is rough for a while, down here.”

- 1 Peter 1:6 (LB)

“Our troubles are short-lived and their outcome is an eternal glory which outweighs them all.”

- 2 Corinthians 4:17 (LB)

7. God will be with us during the storm.

“When you go through deep waters and great troubles, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you.”

- Isaiah 43:2 (LB)

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle

Hers was a difficult life. She was the twenty-fifth child in a dissenter's family in a harsh age. Though brilliant, she procured little education. Though strong-willed, she lived in a male-dominated period. She married an older man and bore him nineteen children, nine of whom died in infancy. Her house burned up, her barn fell down, her health failed, and she lived with the wolf at the door. In the end several of her children bitterly disappointed her.

But two of her children changed the world.

She was Susanna Annesley, born in London in 1669. Twenty years later, she married an Anglican clergyman named Samuel Wesley, and they were assigned the pastorate of a church in the dreary little town of Epworth, England. There they served forty years, enduring hardships like these:

- Samuel's salary was so small (and he was so incapable of managing it) that he was thrown into debtor's prison, leaving Susanna to fend for herself.
- He was an unpopular minister, aloof and severe with his congregation, resulting in rejection and even persecution. On one occasion, the Wesley home was burned to the ground, almost taking the Wesleys with it.
- Samuel and Susanna were both strong-willed and argumentative. Samuel once prayed for the king and waited for Susanna's "Amen." She didn't say it. "I do not believe the Prince of Orange to be the king," she said spiritedly. "Then you and I must part," replied Samuel "for if we have two kings we must have two beds." They separated, to be reunited only after the king's death.
- They also disagreed about Susanna's ministry, for her Bible lessons drew more listeners than his sermons, causing Samuel intense feelings of resentment.
- Susanna gave birth to a daughter during the election of 1705. The nurse, exhausted by overnight revelry, slept so heavily the next morning that she rolled on the baby and smothered it.
- Susanna herself was often bedfast, having to delegate home duties to the children. But several of her children were so wayward that she called them "a constant affliction."
- Her brother, having promised her a sizable gift, disappeared mysteriously and was never heard from again.
- Finally, on July 21, 1731, Susanna described an accident in which her horses stampeded, throwing Samuel from their wagon and injuring him so that he was never well from that day.

A difficult life. And yet...

And yet the parsonage at Epworth was destined to become the most celebrated in English history, for from it came two of the greatest evangelists of all time, John and Charles Wesley. And the mother who raised them shook the world.

Ours is sometimes a difficult life, and we occasionally wonder if we're doing any good. Do our feeble efforts count for eternity? But God has given us a promise, so we press through the difficulty by faith: **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).**

¹Morgan, Robert J.: *Real Stories for the Soul*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, S. 4.

Four Important Things to Remember about Life's Storms

An Important Passage Study:

Source: This outline was inspired by a sermon by Dr. O.S.Hawkins.

NOTE: In the Study Verse Section, the words of Holy Scripture are in bold face and my commentary is in the light face.

Study Verse Section—Romans 8:28, NASB95 - ²⁸ And we as Christians **know** intuitively and can experience personally **that God causes** lit., “harmonizes” **all** ie., every single one—all—good and bad **things to work** we get our English word “synergy” from this word, **together for good** lit., “the good” **to those who** (1) **love God**, and (2) **to those who are called according to His** ie., eternal **purpose**.

1. There is always something **CONFIDENTIAL** about the storms in your life.

“And we know ...”

2. There is always something **COMPREHENSIVE** about the storms in your life.

“... that God causes all things ...”

3. There is always something **CONSTRUCTIVE** about the storms in your life.

“... that God causes all things to work together for good...”

4. There is always something **CONDITIONAL** about the storms in your life.

“... to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose ...”

Two Quotes to Encourage You

While growing up in Texas, I enjoyed my mother's buttermilk biscuits made from “scratch” every morning for breakfast. But there was not a single ingredient in those biscuits that I would have enjoyed by itself. And even after they were mixed together, I would not have cared for the raw biscuit dough. Only after they were mixed together in the right proportions by my mother's skillful hands and then subjected to the fire of the oven were they ready to be enjoyed for breakfast.

The “things” of Romans 8:28 are like the ingredients of the biscuit dough. By themselves they are not tasteful to us. We shun them. And we certainly shun the heat of the oven. But when God in His infinite skill has blended them all together and cooked them properly in the oven of adversity, we shall one day say, “It is good.”

- Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God Even When Life Hurts*, pp. 151-152

“On that ghastly Friday morning, which ironically has become known as “Good Friday,” Jesus was a swollen, bloody mess. Most of his friends had hightailed it hours before, leaving him alone to face the physical agony of crucifixion, the emotional anguish of a jeering crowd, and the spiritual horror of separation from God the Father.

Yet during this entire nightmare, Christ responded, well, strangely. On the way to his execution, he paused to console a group of grief-stricken women. He used what little breath he was able to catch to pray for those who were so merciless to him. He demonstrated compassion and forgiveness to a criminal dying at his side. And he took pains, literally, to see that his grief-

stricken mother below him would be cared for by a friend.

In the ultimate "tough time," Christ oozed kindness and goodness. And because his Spirit lives in us, we also have the capacity to use personal tragedy as an opportunity to care for others.

"Praying God's Promise"

Cause your kindness and goodness to flow through me, Lord. It is not natural for me to think of others or to think of glorifying you, especially when my own life is filled with pain. Teach me to live supernaturally. I want to be selfless like you, Jesus, always looking for opportunities to bless others.

- Praying God's Promises in Tough Times by Len Wood (Tyndale) pp 154-55.

Scriptures To Encourage Those Experiencing Adversity

Matthew 6:25-34, NLT - ²⁵ *"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?"* ²⁶ *Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?"* ²⁷ *Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?"* ²⁸ *"And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing,"* ²⁹ *yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.* ³⁰ *And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?"* ³¹ *"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'"* ³² *These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.* ³³ *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.* ³⁴ *"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

Philippians 4:6-7, NLT - ⁶ *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.* ⁷ *Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

1 Peter 5:6-7, NIV - ⁶ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.* ⁷ *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

1 Chronicles 29:11-12, NIV - ¹¹ *Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.* ¹² *Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*

John 16:33, NIV - ³³ *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Matthew 5:45, The Living Bible - ⁴⁵ *... Sunlight [comes] to both the evil and the good, and [it] rains on the just and on the unjust too.*

Psalms 23:4, NASB95 - ⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

Isaiah 43:2, The Living Bible - ² *When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you.*

2 Corinthians 4:17, NLT - ¹⁷ *For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*